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ABSTRACT

This booklet offers a brief history of teacher lore, examines its theoretical bases, and summarizes its professional value, discussing how preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and others can use teacher lore for professional development. Teacher lore, or teacher narrative, includes fiction and nonfiction, oral storytelling, print, film, television, and online exchanges. Interacting with teacher lore offers such benefits as creating a professional community, challenging teachers to become reflective practitioners and change agents, and offering a better picture of schools and what they might become. Using teacher lore with preservice teachers can involve autobiography, others' stories, personal reflections on practice, and cases. Textbooks for preservice teachers are beginning to reflect the importance of teacher lore. Using teacher lore with inservice teachers can be accomplished through teacher research, graduate coursework, other professional development possibilities, and teacher evaluation. Using teacher lore with other stakeholders can help improve the decisions of educational policymakers and the understanding by the general public of what is going on in schools. (Contains 42 resources and 51 references.) (SM)

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Teacher Lore

Gretchen Schwarz
with Joyce Roberts
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Gretchen Schwarz

Gretchen Schwarz is an associate professor in the School of Curriculum and Educational Leadership at Oklahoma State University, where she teaches curriculum studies. A former high school English and German teacher, Schwarz received her B.A. in English from Baylor University, her M.A. in humanities from the University of Texas at Arlington, and her Ph.D. in secondary education from the University of North Texas.

Schwarz's research interests include teacher lore, school reform, and media literacy. She has published articles on teacher lore, media literacy, and young adult literature and is the author, with Joye Alberts, of *Teacher Lore and Professional Development for School Reform* (Bergin & Garvey, 1998).

Teacher Lore

by
Gretchen Schwarz
with
Joye Alberts
and
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Introduction

At breakfast with a group of local Writing Project teachers not long ago, a young man in his second year of high school teaching told about how he had tried peer revision groups in his English class the past week. His students merely told one another their writing was fine, made no useful suggestions for revision, and finished quickly. A veteran elementary teacher then gave the young man specific ideas from her experience on how to model peer response groups and why he should stick with this method.

Teachers tell and listen to stories to let off steam, to entertain, and to influence others. But more important, they tell stories to find out they are not alone, to see the meaning in their daily lives, to solve problems, and to improve their work. When they need help with a teaching problem, they can find solutions through the exchange of stories with colleagues. This practice is known as teacher lore, and it is essential to good teaching.

Schubert defines teacher lore as:

> Teacher lore includes stories about and by teachers. It portrays and interprets ways in which teachers de-

> liberate and reflect and it portrays teachers in action. Teacher lore refers to knowledge, ideas, insights, feelings, and understandings of teachers as they reveal their guiding beliefs, share approaches, relate consequences of their teaching, offer aspects of their philosophy of teaching and provide recommendations for educational policy makers. (1992, p. 9)

Teacher lore, or teacher narrative, includes fiction and nonfiction, oral storytelling, print, film, television, and online exchanges. Teacher narratives offer teachers rich ways to enact reflective practice. They offer administrators and teacher educators diverse means for understanding and helping teachers; and they offer policy makers, the public, and families real insight into American schools and students. Teacher lore can play a significant role in making schools better places.

In this fastback I offer a brief history of teacher lore, examine its theoretical bases, and summarize its professional value. Finally, I discuss how preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and others can use teacher lore for professional development, and I offer additional resources.

History of Teacher Lore

Teacher lore is as old as teaching itself. Stories of teachers and their pupils, such as Eli and Samuel, appear in the Old Testament. In the first century A.D., Quintilian, the first successful teacher to set up a public school in Rome and to receive a state salary, wrote the *Institutio Oratoria,* which includes tales from Quintilian's own life as a teacher and from other authorities. There are many stories of teachers in novels, from Dickens' *Hard Times* in the 19th century to Hilton's *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* in the 20th century. Hollywood, too, offers its own version of teacher lore, usually portraying teachers as either buffoons — such as the detention teacher in *The Breakfast Club* or the lovelorn "Our Miss Brooks" on TV — or as lone heroic types — such as the teacher portrayed by Michelle Pfeiffer in *Dangerous Minds.*

Teachers have found nourishment in teacher lore for many years. Isenberg (1994), for example, tells about being influenced by the story, *Teacher,* by Sylvia Ashton Warner. Even though *Teacher* is about teaching very young Maori children in New Zealand, Isenberg found a role model for herself with American teens. Many teachers have had similar experiences with books or the tales of

their own colleagues. Likewise, individual works of teacher lore have had an effect on individual fields. For example, Nancie Atwell's *In the Middle*, based on Atwell's own experiences with reading and writing workshops, has influenced a growing number of teachers and the language arts curriculum nationwide. Eliot Wigginton's *Sometimes a Shining Moment*, which describes the birth of Foxfire and its oral history projects, has also inspired a number of imitators.

Although long popular and often influential in an indirect, informal way, teacher lore has only recently begun to be taken seriously by academe. The growing interest in teacher narrative is reflected in numerous articles, books, and research, especially since the publication of Witherell and Noddings' *Stories Lives Tell* in 1991 and Schubert and Ayers' *Teacher Lore* in 1992. Teacher lore has begun to find a formal place in teacher education, professional development, professional publications, textbooks, and even education research and policy.

Teacher lore is more than a passing fad. It builds on the real knowledge and experiences of practicing teachers. Now diverse educators are creating and employing more intentional, structured uses of teacher lore.

Theoretical Bases for Teacher Lore

Stories have the power to convey information, ideals, values, lessons, and culture. Jesus used parables to teach his disciples spiritual truths in a vivid, down-to-earth way. Parents tell stories to convey family history and beliefs, which children then remember. Even Plato used stories, such as the parable of the prisoners in the cave, to communicate his philosophy. Storytelling comes naturally to human beings as they interact with one another; it can be a powerful force for understanding.

A growing number of contemporary scholars from a variety of fields acknowledge the power of narrative in learning and teaching. Robert Coles, professor of psychiatry and medical humanities at Harvard, tells about using narratives in graduate courses in law, medicine, and education. He says that "a compelling narrative, offering a storyteller's moral imagination vigorously at work, can enable us to learn by example, to take to heart what is, really, a gift of grace" (1989, p. 191). Kreps (1998) delineates the use of stories and storytelling as instructional tools in university speech communications classes.

Psychologist Jerome Bruner argues that narrative is one of the two "irreducible modes of cognitive functioning — or more simply, two modes of thought," the other being the paradigmatic or logico-scientific mode (1985, pp. 97-98). Narrative is how people construct knowledge of much of their world.

Within education, several strands of inquiry serve to legitimate teacher lore, including feminist scholarship, work in multicultural education, constructivist theory, and theory and research related to school change. Researchers in both feminist and multicultural education are interested in voice, especially the voices of those who traditionally have been marginalized. Women and minorities have seldom been administrators and policy makers in American schools; while the teaching force is still largely female, administration remains male and white. Teacher lore offers women and minorities a way to be heard. Grumet and McCoy (1997), for example, discuss how women's ways of knowing — often through narrative — have challenged not only issues of gender and identity but even the traditional education research paradigms. Likewise, such works as Foster's collection of stories by black teachers, *Black Teachers on Teaching*, offers diverse viewpoints of those seldom heard before. Foster explains:

> Life history and the associated techniques of oral history and personal narrative are forms of analysis that can bring the experiences of blacks, including teachers, into view in ways that reveal the complexity of their experiences. Life history not only provides material about individual lives but also offers the opportunity to

explore how individual lives are shaped by society. (1997, p. xx)

Constructivist learning theory argues that human beings of all ages construct their own knowledge. Top-down regulations and career ladders do not make teachers learn. Teachers learn when they are puzzled or disturbed by some aspect of their own classroom practice; then they seek to gain new information, solve problems, and create new approaches. Teacher lore is one way to personalize learning and help teachers discover their specific needs.

Finally, scholars of school change argue that school reform requires more than the traditional one-shot in-service day to which teachers have become accustomed. School improvement requires teachers' involvement, but that involvement must be personally and professionally empowering for teachers. Ongoing growth and change are time consuming, complex, and often difficult. As Fullan and Stiegebauer explain, "All change, including progress, contains ambivalence and dilemmas because, when we set off on a journey to achieve significant change, we do not know in advance all the details of how to get there, or even what it is going to be like when we arrive" (1991, p. 345). Teacher lore both reflects and encourages this kind of uncertain developmental process. Fullan and Stiegebauer also note, "Significant educational change consists in changes in beliefs, teaching style, and materials, which can come about *only* through a process of personal development in a social context" (p. 132). Teacher lore can contribute to such development, leading to real growth and change.

Teacher lore is not a panacea that ensures teacher learning, school change, or social justice. Teacher lore has its critics, and much research remains to be done. However, teacher narrative — educators reading, writing, reflecting, and sharing stories — offers one option for authentic teacher growth and a deeper understanding of schools and education issues. Interacting with teacher lore offers the following benefits:

1. It validates teachers as knowers who have a key role in ongoing school improvement.
2. It reveals teacher work from the inside, within diverse contexts, showing the complexity of real classrooms.
3. It creates a professional community.
4. It challenges teachers to become reflective practitioners and change agents.
5. It offers others a better and more clear picture of schools and what they might become.

Using Teacher Lore with Preservice Teachers

Good teaching is a process, and teachers must be reflective about their teaching lives. Teacher lore is one way to encourage that reflection. Preservice teachers should be made familiar with teacher lore in a variety of forms, including autobiographical writing; others' stories in print, film, or oral storytelling; reflective writing and class discussion; cases; and textbooks. All of these benefit future teachers in a number of ways.

Autobiography

Knowles and Holt-Reynolds, in their introduction to a special issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly* devoted to autobiographical writing, comment:

> Why write about personal histories? Because in one sense, they are teacher education. Teachers' lives as school pupils before they become teachers, their lives as scholars while they prepare to become teachers, their lives as variously contributing members of the workforce and society, and their lives as professionals in a career pre-

> sent few clear boundaries. . . . What they lived and learned in the past and what they live and learn today becomes a history they reference for their living and learning tomorrow. (1994, p. 6)

Having students write life histories in the context of teacher education allows them to connect their personal and professional lives, examining why they want to teach, what they believe about how children learn, what knowledge is most important, and what kinds of places schools should and can be.

Knowles (1993) describes how future teachers write accounts of such topics as outstanding teachers they have had, metaphors for teaching as they envision it, or doubts about themselves as teachers. Then the teacher educator extends this internal dialogue by responding in writing. The implicit is made explicit and open to confirmation or challenge. Future teachers can come to understand their own assumptions, as well as question them. They gain practice in reflection.

Life histories fall under the category of teacher narrative that Preskill calls the "narrative of journey," which calls on teachers to "reflect on their own lives, their own struggles to learn, and their own efforts to teach well in light of those earlier experiences" (1998, p. 353).

Personal stories about teaching place the teaching profession within its human context. Teaching is seen as a life's calling involving the whole human being, a vocation that is complex, ongoing, and often uncertain. This view of teaching is especially needed given the instrumental, technical view so popular in teacher education reform efforts that emphasize "rigor," quality

control, standardized testing, and competency lists. At the heart of teaching lies humanity and its struggles.

The Future Teachers' Autobiography Club, begun by Florio-Ruane at Michigan State University, is a voluntary program for education students. Future teachers are required to read and discuss such teacher autobiographies as Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundary* (1989) and Vivian Paley's *White Teacher* (1979). In addition, students write and share their own life stories. Not only does this encourage reflection in general, it prepares teachers to deal with culturally diverse classrooms. Florio-Ruane maintains that one way "for teacher candidates to appreciate the experiences of diverse learners is to examine their own and others' autobiographies, focusing on issues of ethnic identity, language, and schooling" (1994, p. 55). She adds that "reading personal narratives of schooling and literacy may prompt teacher candidates to ask important questions" about the cultural messages curricula communicate and the effects of pedagogical approaches on diverse students (p. 56).

Such an approach, formalized in the teacher education curriculum, would use the category of teacher lore Preskill calls the "narrative of social criticism." When reading a book such as *Lives on the Boundary* or hearing from other students how schooling was not a positive experience, future teachers can become "more critical about the place of education in society, and . . . gain new understanding of the school's historic role in maintaining an often unjust and inhumane status quo," examining how "racism, miseducation, and bureaucratic insensitivity have plagued schools" (1998, p. 347).

Similarly, Gomez and Tabachnik (1992) relate their experiences using personal narratives in an elementary teacher education program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison aimed at preparation for multicultural classrooms.

In short, the uses of autobiographical teacher narrative can communicate the importance of reflection; the notion of teaching as an unfinished, unpredictable journey; and the diversity of school experiences in America, some of which demonstrate the need for teachers to work for justice and equality in the schools.

Others' Stories

Future teachers need to examine the teaching life. They need to explore public attitudes toward teachers and how the media inform these attitudes. And they need to acquire useful skills, information, attitudes, and theories. The stories of other teachers, both true and fictional, can help with these needs throughout a teacher education program, from foundations courses to early field experience and methods courses. Pinnegar argues that teacher lore can expand the experiences of preservice teachers beyond actual time spent in the classroom because it exposes them to "past experience, field experience, imagined experience, constructed and reconstructed experience, experience borrowed from others (like stories, cases, videos), and predicted future experience" (1997, pp. 56-57).

Tama and Peterson (l991) describe an entire course at Portland State University designed for developing reflective practice and communicating ideas about

teaching through fiction and nonfiction. Students read books and view films about teachers and write journal responses. Rust (1999) discusses the work of voluntary professional conversation groups that include preservice teachers as part of the Sustainable Teacher Learning and Research Network Project, a network of 10 groups in the United States, Canada, and Israel. Oral sharing of stories lies at the heart of the these groups' work.

I have detailed elsewhere how I use teacher lore in preservice education (Schwarz and Alberts 1998). I begin in the early field experience course by asking students to review a film like *Dangerous Minds*. It is important to challenge the Hollywood portrayal of the lone, heroic teacher; and students need to ask questions about how involved in students' personal lives they should become. In the secondary English methods class, we use literature circles that discuss such books as Freedman's *Small Victories*, in which specific teaching techniques become vivid and meaningful. I also invite practicing teachers into the class to share their stories of units, lessons, and approaches that have been successful. Embedded in all these stories are ideas, information, and attitudes worth imitating and also questioning.

In the classroom management course that precedes student teaching, I have used English teacher Elaine Greenspan's *A Teacher's Survival Guide*, which consists of Greenspan's stories about her teaching career and her conclusions about teaching, offering advice on such topics as organizing, taking care of one's self, and working with difficult colleagues, as well as "challenging" students. Greenspan includes interviews and stories of

other teachers, as well. With its realistic context and humor, this book engages future teachers in ways that a list of 35 rules for classroom management cannot. Teacher lore taps into the emotional side of teaching, as well as the technical side, conveying the feelings of teaching along with the facts.

These uses of teacher lore fall into what Preskill terms the "narrative of apprenticeship," which "recounts the efforts of skilled veterans to advise novices, helping them develop the practices they will need to flourish as teachers" (1998, p. 346). Joseph and Burnaford capture the value of the apprenticeship narrative:

> Teacher education must provide sufficient opportunities to fully imagine what it is like to be a teacher. . . . Interacting with stories, evoking the memories of teachers and those who have been taught, and joining in conversation about film or television portraitures of teachers may give new teachers an added awareness of this profession in this society and its personal meaning as well. (1994, p. 6)

Stories, in print, video, or shared by teachers — including the teacher educator's own "war stories," may also fall into Preskill's category of the "narrative of hope," which "accentuates optimism and imagination and a sense of wonder as foundations for good education" (1998, p. 353). Local teachers' tales of success, the inspiration of such films as *Dangerous Minds* (despite its questionable aspects) or *Mr. Holland's Opus*, and the study of such books as Herbert Kohl's *The Discipline of Hope* (1998) can affirm and encourage the altruism that so many future teachers bring with them. Teacher lore

can help preserve idealism while showing a realistic picture of the teacher's life and the many things a teacher needs to know and be able to do.

Personal Reflections on Practice

Similar to life histories, preservice teachers' stories of their own teaching fall into Preskill's category of "narrative of reflective practice," which promotes teachers "who are self-critical in constructive ways and who apply what they learn through self-reflection to their everyday practices in schools" (1998, p. 350). Such reflections are appropriate for preservice teachers during field experiences, especially the teacher internship. Freidus (1998), for example, describes using narratives in the teacher candidate portfolio process. Student teachers share stories about some dilemma or issue with their faculty mentors and peer groups, who meet monthly to support students in their construction of professional portfolios. In the process of improving understanding and practice, professional community is also developed. Freidus explains:

> Working together as an interpretive community, students and faculty consider the complexities presented by one student's dilemma. The process leads toward a new understanding of theory and a more analytic reflection on practice. . . . Participants work hard at learning to hear what their colleagues are trying to say, to understand points of view that may contradict their long held beliefs. They also work hard to honor the efforts of others. . . . Their sharing of story scaffolds the process of critical thought. Asking thoughtful questions of

> others encourages participants to ask increasingly more thoughtful questions of their own emerging work. (1998, p. 13)

Maas reports on what is probably becoming a more common practice in teacher education, the use of storytelling as the base of a student teaching seminar. Sharing stories allows intern teachers to critique their own methods, reexamine their assumptions about school and students, question what they have been studying in college courses, and overcome teacher isolation. Maas declares, "The lessons of the seminar, the information, were embedded within the language of stories. . . . We learned about others, and about the worlds that surround them, through our stories. We ultimately learned about teaching" (1991, p. 218).

Personal teacher lore is not an added frill in the teacher education process. It is essential for novice teachers to make sense of their experiences.

Using Cases

Cases are specially created teacher narratives for use in classroom settings. Cases supply a context and an issue or dilemma with which future teachers may struggle. Silverman, Welty, and Lyon (1992), for example, have put together a book of cases based on the experiences of elementary and secondary teachers. An example of a case is the story of a social studies teacher who takes over a high school AP class and has trouble communicating with the students, who seem arrogant. Study questions may be attached to cases; some teacher educators de-

mand a certain format for analysis. The case method can be used across the teacher education curriculum: in introductory education courses, methods or curriculum courses, educational psychology, and field-experience courses. Cases make a versatile teaching tool. Silverman, Welty, and Lyon explain the power of using cases:

> At first, case method may seem a strange way of learning. . . . It does not present educational theory in neatly organized chapters with carefully designed tables, charts, and explanations. Rather it presents stories about real [or realistic] teachers in real schools and asks that you go to the theory and try to apply it to understand the stories and the problems they present. . . . Deciding for yourself — that is really the heart of case method pedagogy (1992, p. xix).

I have found the cases provided in *The Ethics of Teaching* by Strike and Soltis (1985) especially useful. These cases challenge education students to think about professional ethics. One case, for instance, describes the dilemma of a new teacher who discovers that his mentor teacher has a drinking problem that affects students. What should the new teacher do? No simple answers for such moral conundrums can be found at the back of the book. Teachers deal with such ethical and ambiguous problems throughout their careers, and new teachers need to begin to consider their own ethical stances and behaviors.

Textbooks

A growing recognition of the importance of teacher stories finally is evident in a variety of textbooks being

published for preservice teachers. For example, Cushner, McClelland, and Safford observe that in their text, *Human Diversity in Education*, "There are a great many stories. . . . Some are about real people and events, while others. . . are folktales and parables. We use these for their power to speak about complex human experiences — in this case, about how people experience the fact of human diversity. Stories help us see the universals within the experience" (2000, p. 22). Similarly, more subject- and level-specific texts, such as *Making the Journey: Being and Becoming a Teacher of English Language Arts* by Leila Christenbury (1994), are built on teacher lore. In this methods text, Christenbury tells stories of her own high school and middle school teaching, as well as stories of her college students.

Stories are not only compelling. They can actually help education students remember and understand even abstract terms, approaches, and processes. As Egan argues, "The story insures memorization by investing material to be learned with the qualities that engage the imagination in the process of learning" (1989, p. 457).

Stories are useful even in the quest for national standards. Such professional organizations as the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association have used teacher lore to communicate standards and current thinking about curriculum and teaching. In the *Standards for the English Language Arts* (NCTE/IRA 1996), there are a number of vignettes of classrooms that illustrate principles of the standards. These vignettes, or mini-cases, are not used to declare "best practices" that teachers should follow in some lock-step fashion, but serve to encourage reflection.

Whether found in texts, cases, autobiographies, or films and books, teacher lore can strengthen education for preservice teachers. Preskill argues:

> The more I work with students studying to become teachers the more convinced I am that narratives of teaching make an invaluable contribution to understanding what it takes to teach well. At their best, these stories are the guides to the challenges, pitfalls, and joys of educating children. . . . They encourage teachers to look very closely. . . . They reaffirm the role that teachers can play in humanizing and democratizing students. . . . They show that fostering student growth necessitates that teachers experience their own ongoing self-development. (1998, p. 344).

Using Teacher Lore with Inservice Teachers

Many of the roles teacher lore can play in the development of preservice teachers can apply to the development of inservice teachers. Teacher lore, whether in cases, reflective writing, or other forms, can play a significant role in the planned, authentic professional growth of practicing teachers. Teacher research, graduate courses, professional development opportunities, and teacher evaluation all provide opportunities for using teacher lore.

Teacher Research

Teacher lore lies at the heart of much teacher research, that is, research that involves teachers as investigators. Patterson, Stansell, and Lee explain:

> Every teacher has stories to tell. Every teacher has truths to share. Teachers can learn to see children in ways that no one else can. Teachers show us the ways students learn, and the reasons that learning is sometimes hard. The research process can help teachers ex-

> plore their decisions, find their own voices, and tell their own stories. Through these stories based on disciplined, systematic research, many teachers have spoken out and changed the ways in which schools work. Ultimately, through research, all teachers can do this. (1990, pp. 1-2)

In fact, teacher research, sometimes also called action research, may be one of the best means of professional development because it validates teacher knowledge, propels critical thinking, creates a scholarly community among teachers, and helps teachers model a life of inquiry for their own students.

Teacher narrative can be the impetus for teacher research. For example, writing about a puzzling situation in a journal can lead a teacher to find out more in an informal, individual manner, both by classroom investigations and by reading the literature on the topic. Stories also can lead to more formal research in a school or university setting. Additional examples of teacher lore leading to further research can be found in *Teacher Lore and Professional Development for School Reform* (Schwarz and Alberts 1998) and in such journals as *Teaching and Change* and *Teacher Researcher*.

Teacher research need not involve stories. However, teacher lore not only can motivate research; it can serve as both a method for doing research and a format for reporting research. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) discuss such teacher research methods as journal writing, oral inquiries into problems with specific students, classroom studies that depend on anecdotal classroom records or case studies, and essays that call on person-

al stories, as well as scholarly theory. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) offer examples of teacher narrative research in their study, *Narrative Inquiry*, suggesting that letters, conversations, photographs, and other artifacts, as well as autobiographical writing and teachers' stories, can serve as field texts or research methods in narrative research. Theses and dissertations now may be reported in a narrative fashion, as well. Stock captures the immediate, particular power of teacher lore:

> As teachers we avoid abstract statements when we talk with one another about our professional work because such statements seem disconnected from what actually occurs in our classrooms. Anecdotal accounts, filled with meaning and significance, seem to serve us better as we research the interactions that constitute teaching and learning in our classrooms. . . . My argument for teacher talk, the power of anecdote, the importance of narrative in educational research rests in just these characteristics. (1993, pp. 185-86)

Precisely because teacher research is practice-oriented, growing out of the concerns and experiences of teachers in real contexts, teacher research can provide an excellent means for teacher learning. Teachers can use narratives to inquire into anything from block scheduling to cooperative learning, whether as part of a university graduate program or part of a district's professional development plan.

Engaging teachers with teacher narrative research is one way to improve schools and build teacher morale. Of course, it is not for everyone; it is time consuming for the teacher, and some teachers may prefer not to con-

duct it. Teachers should choose to do research; constructing one's own knowledge cannot be mandated.

Graduate Coursework

University coursework, leading either to advanced degrees or just more credit hours, has long been considered a form of professional development for teachers. Unfortunately, such courses have not always been relevant to teachers, nor have they always demonstrated a respect for teacher knowledge. However, the use of teacher lore in college is growing and can lead to meaningful intellectual and professional growth. The increasing number of theses and dissertations using teacher narrative research reflect this trend. I use Rouse's *Provocations: The Story of Mrs. M* (1993) as an engaging discussion starter for a graduate class in the language arts curriculum. Other colleagues use teacher lore in curriculum theory. One colleague uses teacher lore extensively to create teacher reflection.

My colleague, Dr. Kathryn Castle, has students write their own cases or stories in a doctoral-level course called Analysis of Teaching. The major term project for the course includes such choices as writing a case for beginning teachers or interviewing an experienced teacher and writing an anecdote or vignette of that teacher's life. These stories are then compared with what published research may say about similar themes, giving teachers another possible point of view. Discussing stories of teacher experience, contrasting them with other stories and sources of information on teaching,

and questioning both stories and other research leads to critical thinking that Castle says can be truly transformational.

My colleague Joye Alberts and I offered an on-site extension course called Teacher Lore: Sharing our Knowledge. The class proved to us that teacher narrative can generate an environment that allows for meaningful and serious communal reflection on teaching — something teachers too seldom have time for in their busy schedules. The course met at one junior high for seven 2-hour sessions in the fall of 1995, and teachers received one hour of graduate credit. The group included elementary and junior high teachers from three different schools in the district.

We began the course with a brief history of and rationale for teacher lore, watching excepts from such videos as *Teachers* and *To Sir, with Love*. Each participant selected a teacher lore book, such as *Up the Down Staircase* or *Among Schoolchildren*, and we discussed the films and books. With this foundation in place, we asked teachers to write a story from the real world of the classroom to share with the group. The stories were powerful. One was the tale of an autistic child who taught the teacher an important lesson. Another was the story of a class that had become a community in which kids could discuss issues threatening their lives. Once the stories were written, we asked each teacher to write a reflection, telling why the story was written, what else a reader might need to know, or where the story had led the teacher-writer. The discussions of the reflections were equally powerful.

The reflections led to closer examinations of the stories and the difficult issues the stories triggered. One story and reflection, for example, led to a realization that there was a lack of trust among teachers in one building, which led to poor morale and less opportunity for professional growth. Personal issues were identified, sometimes to the dismay of a teacher. One teacher commented, "You find out things sometimes that you just don't want to know about yourself." Teachers also identified a number of complex issues being discussed in the larger education community, from integrated learning to second-language learners and multiple intelligences. In the process, these teachers created a real learning community for themselves.

Newkirk writes of the importance of making schools productive learning environments for both teachers and students. Creating such environments "will mean creating opportunities for teachers to teach teachers. It will mean the end of inservice programs that treat teachers as passive receptacles, and it will mean opportunities for them to develop their creative abilities" (1992, pp. xii-xiii). Such courses and workshops can help teachers write about and reflect on their teaching lives in a caring community of colleagues.

Other Professional Development Possibilities

Teachers find worthwhile professional development outside college classes, of course. The extension course we offered could well have led to ongoing story and

study groups, collaborative teacher research, and other forms of peer teaching. Case studies also can serve as the basis for development programs. Ackerman, Maslin-Ostrowski, and Christensen (1996) describe their method for employing what they call "case stories" in all-day professional development and leadership institutes, as well as graduate courses. Their basic model requires a minimum of three hours and involves the following six steps:

1. The freewrite (warm-up).
2. Writing case stories.
3. Telling, listening, and discussing cases.
4. Small-group reflection.
5. Whole-group reflection.
6. Conclusion (pp. 21-23).

Another approach is described by Ritchie and Wilson in their study, *Teacher Narrative as Critical Inquiry*. A large part of their work includes a "collaborative professional development project that pulled together 25 teachers . . . from eastern Nebraska to reflect on the forces that had shaped them as teachers and to articulate their teaching autobiographies and their present beliefs and understandings of teaching and English" (2000, pp. 8-9). Social criticism and changed practice have been major results of this project. Ritchie and Wilson give the example of teacher John Skretta, who says, "What I can do is offer students a sense of hope by putting the power of privilege to work for them in limited ways. I can help them through the attendance appeals process, I can offer advice to them on their English classes, I can talk

to them about strategies for meeting with an administrator when they're facing a disciplinary referral. I can be real and approachable. I can hear their voices" (p. 149). Ritchie and Wilson declare that "change is made possible and becomes sustainable when teachers gain critical perspective on how their identities have been constructed by/in the culture and how cultural narratives of teaching have shaped their personal and professional subjectivities" (p. 180).

Taggart and Wilson (1998) offer staff developers a variety of strategies to enhance reflective practice. These strategies include reflective journals; such mental-model strategies as metaphors; such narrative strategies as story, autobiographical sketches, and case study; and action research. In addition, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) argue that curriculum planning ought to be an outgrowth of teacher narrative. They offer such methods as keeping journals and document analysis to enable teachers to reflect on and implement curriculum so that curriculum development, too, becomes professional development. They state that "all teaching and learning questions — all curriculum matters — be looked at from the point of view of the involved persons. . . . We believe that it is teachers' 'personal knowledge' that determines all matters of significance relative to the planned conduct of classrooms" (p. 4).

Teacher lore is being used in a variety of ways with inservice teachers, and it lies at the heart of one of the most successful professional development programs in the country, the National Writing Project (NWP). The NWP, founded by James Gray in 1974 as the Bay Area

Writing Project, is a school-university partnership made up of over 160 sites in the United States and other countries. NWP programs often have been singled out as models for professional development (McLaughlin 1991; Shanker 1990). Each site invites teachers for an intensive summer institute in which teachers read, research, and, most important, share stories of what works in their own classrooms. Teachers then can become consultants for a variety of inservice offerings around their state, even the nation. In addition, teachers become published writers through local newsletters; in the NWP journal, *The Quarterly*; and in books written and edited by teachers. For example, *Teachers' Voices: Portfolios in the Classroom* (1993), edited by Mary Ann Smith and Miriam Ylvisaker, features stories of teachers across the grade levels who have used and studied portfolios in their own classrooms. Local, regional, national, and international conferences also offer teachers the opportunity to share their lore in person. The NWP has created a powerful professional community founded on the knowledge, the dedication, and the curiosity of teachers who share their lore.

Teacher Evaluation

Even teacher evaluation can use teacher narratives. As Fullan and Stiegebauer argue, "the primary purpose of teacher evaluation should be teacher development" (1991, p. 325). Unfortunately, teacher evaluation rarely lives up to that promise when abstract checklists, narrow models of teaching, and test scores are used to evaluate teachers.

Wood describes a narrative-based teacher evaluation system that offers experienced, competent teachers genuine learning opportunities. Wood rejects evaluation models that deny the knowledge and experience teachers bring with them. She prefers a model that contributes to teacher learning by "a) encouraging their reflection on classroom experiences; b) facilitating the articulation of insights gleaned from that reflection; and c) using these insights for problem solving, development of educative theory, and institutional change" (1992, p. 537). The following are the phases of Wood's program:

1. An initial interview between teacher and supervisor, during which the teacher recounts a critical incident or particular memory of his or her teaching or learning experience.
2. A collaborative interpretation of that narrative by the supervisor and teacher to discover a continuing challenge or theme in the teacher's professional life.
3. Reflection by the teacher on this story and its theme, and the eventual selection of professional goals based on the insights gained from the reflection.
4. A second interview, during which the supervisor and teacher explore the teacher's goals and ways to monitor progress toward these goals.
5. At least one classroom observation conducted by the supervisor using the teacher's stated goals.
6. Feedback to the teacher in narrative style.

7. A written self-evaluation by the teacher.
8. A written evaluation by the supervisor that responds to the teacher's self-evaluation;
9. A discussion before the end of the year on opportunities for further professional growth (pp. 537-38).

Teachers, according to Wood, find value in this process. Clearly, this is a labor-intensive approach to evaluation, and it works well when it is voluntary. Nevertheless, using a teacher story allows a teacher to personalize the evaluation process and to make a commitment to finding and solving real classroom problems. The supervisor also can have a more meaningful experience in this evaluation process, coming to understand better each teacher.

There are significant possibilities for using teacher lore in professional development. However, teacher lore is not the one "answer" for all teaching and school problems. For one thing, a way has to be found for the narrative to expose the problems of teaching and not simply to reinforce teachers' unproductive views. Also, teachers have varying needs and are in different stages of professional development. Teachers must have choice, a safe environment, and sufficient time to make inservice opportunities work for them.

Using Teacher Lore with Other Stakeholders

Educators are not the only ones who can benefit from teacher lore. Teacher stories also can help improve the decisions of education policy makers and public understanding of American schools. Teacher stories can offer much for anyone who wants to understand schooling better.

Education policy makers at all levels may make better decisions if they pay attention to teacher lore (Flinders 1989). It is teachers who are closest to students and their needs, not the politicians and not consultants. Hargreaves calls for a "New Deal for teachers in which they become agents rather than objects of educational change — change that in the end only they can bring to fruition with the pupils that they teach" (1997, p. 114). Teacher lore is one means for teacher voices to be heard.

Finally, teacher narrative can reveal to parents and the public what is really going on in schools today. For example, in *Holler If You Hear Me* (1999), Gregory Michie captures the voices of his inner-city students, as well as his own teacher voice. No one reading this book can

easily write off the Latino and African-American children who struggle for a decent life in today's Chicago. Michie asserts the power of hope in the face of overwhelming obstacles.

The reality of teaching — its difficulty and complexities — can be accessed in teacher lore. Real stories of teachers, as opposed to crisis rhetoric and misleading statistics, can help people both appreciate their schools and figure out what kinds of school reforms to support. Rather than accepting the negative media portrayals teachers have received over the last twenty years, coming to know teachers as persons struggling within diverse and changing contexts humanizes the education process. Perhaps that is the greatest achievement of teacher lore.

Resources

For those who want to know more about this subject, following are additional resources.

Films

The Blackboard Jungle (1955). Based on the 1954 book by Evan Hunter, this is the story of a new teacher who fights to win a place for himself in a crisis-ridden urban school. The movie introduced the hit song, "Rock Around the Clock."

Ciao, Professore! (1976). Italian with subtitles. This is a comedy about a professor sent to teach third-grade "toughs" in a poor area; he becomes dedicated to the children.

Conrack (1974). Based on the book *The Water Is Wide* by Pat Conroy, this movie is about another nonconforming new teacher who cares about poor, black kids.

Dead Poets Society (1989). Private school American kids are captured by the romantic, nonconformist spirit of their new English teacher.

Educating Rita (1983). This is a Pygmalion story of a dissipated literature professor mentoring an unschooled hairdresser, who finally outgrows him.

Goodbye, Mr. Chips (1939, 1969). Based on the 1934 book by James Hilton, this is a classic tale of a tough but much-loved schoolmaster in the traditional British public school.

Good Morning, Miss Dove (1955). Based on the novel by F.G. Patton, this is the story of a female Mr. Chips.

Mr. Holland's Opus (1995). This is the upbeat story of a musician who evolves into an inspirational high school band director.

Music of the Heart (1999). This is the female version of *Mr. Holland's Opus*, this time involving a Harlem violin teacher.

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (1969). Based on the book by Muriel Spark, this is a portrait of a nonconformist demagogue who makes and loses disciples at a British girls' school.

Stand and Deliver (1987). This movie is based on the life of teacher Jaime Escalante, who showed that barrio kids can master AP calculus.

To Sir, with Love (1967). From the book by Edward Braithwaite, this is the story of a new, black teacher who treats poor, urban, white British kids as adults and wins their appreciation.

Up the Down Staircase (1967). Based on the book by Bel Kaufman, this is another story of a new teacher struggling with bureaucracy and delinquents in a New York City High School.

Books

Avi. *Nothing but the Truth*. New York: Avon, 1991. This young adult novel explores a fictional teacher's ruin in the midst of politics and bureaucracy.

Ayers, William, and Ford, Patricia, eds. *City Kids, City Teachers*. New York: New Press, 1996. Essays and memoirs about teaching well in urban schools.

Barth, John. *End of the Road*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958. Describes the experiences of a fictional English teacher at a state teacher's college.

Bluestein, Jane, ed. *Mentors, Masters, and Mrs. Macgregor: Stories of Teachers Making a Difference*. Deerfield Beach, Fla.: Heath, 1995. Famous people from Jimmy Carter to Desmond Tutu tell about important teachers in their lives.

Cohen, Rosetta Marantz. *A Lifetime of Teaching: Portraits of Five Veteran High School Teachers*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1991. Includes five case studies of real teachers.

Fedullo, Mick. *Light of the Feather: A Teacher's Journey into Native American Classrooms and Culture*. New York: Anchor, 1992. Stories of a teacher and writer-in-residence at the Sacaton School District on the Gila River Indian Reservation in Arizona from 1979 to 1984.

Freedman, Samuel. *Small Victories*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1990. A journalist follows the life of a dedicated high school English teacher during the 1987-88 school year in Manhattan's diverse Lower East Side.

Herndon, James. *Notes from a Schoolteacher*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985. Herndon's life as a junior high teacher, critical of school policies.

Holt, John. *How Children Fail*. New York: Putnam, 1964. This insider's look is a critique of schooling.

Jalongo, M.R., and Isenberg, J.P. *Teachers' Stories: From Personal Narrative to Professional Insight*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995. The authors offer a rationale for using and valuing teacher lore and provide examples and strategies for generating teacher stories.

Jones, Ron. *No Substitute for Madness*. Covelo, Calif.: Island Press, 1976. The author shares stories of working with severely handicapped children at a summer camp.

Kane, Pearl Rock. *The First Year of Teaching*. New York: Walker, 1991. The author tells real stories of first-year teaching, from plagiarism and discipline to graduation.

Keizer, Garret. *No Place but Here: A Teacher's Vocation in a Rural Community*. New York: Penguin, 1988. This is the everyday life of a rural Vermont English teacher.

Kidder, Tracy. *Among Schoolchildren*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989. A journalist shadows Mrs. Zalac, a fifth-grade teacher in a decaying Massachusetts urban area.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. *The Dreamkeepers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994. The author describes successful teachers of African-American children.

Levine, Sarah, ed. *A Passion for Teaching*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1999. This book collects stories, poems, and artwork from veteran teachers around the United States.

Logan, Judy. *Teaching Stories*. New York: Kodansha International, 1997. A middle school teacher in San Francisco for more than 20 years describes changes in her neighborhood. Explores a feminist, multicultural curriculum.

Macrorie, Ken. *Twenty Teachers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984. Macrorie looks at what 20 diverse, but excellent teachers have in common.

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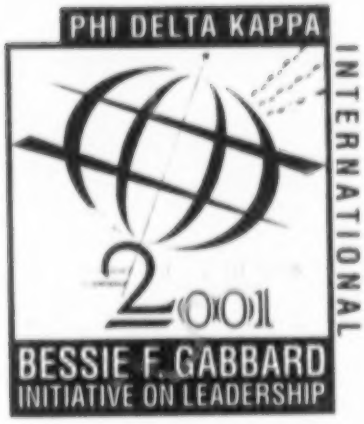

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The Bessie F. Gabbard Initiative on Leadership in Education for the 21st Century, dubbed the 2000-2001 Celebration for short, reaffirms the central importance of the Phi Delta Kappa tenet of leadership. Bessie F. Gabbard (1905-2001), the "First Lady" of PDK and a member and longtime chair of the board of governors of the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, provided the impetus for this initiative, which will focus the energies of PDK members and staff during the two years of transition to the new millennium. During this 2000-2001 Celebration, special attention will be paid to leaders and leadership in education with a particular focus on PDK's traditional advocacy on behalf of the public schools.

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Two children visit the school dispensary for first-aid treatment in this 1912 scene from the Mayflower School in Cleveland, Ohio.

Courtesy of the Cleveland Public Library Photograph Collection.